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ABSTRACT

Despite the pervasive presence of popular music in society and the continued controversy over its effects on children and teen-agers, the recording industry has received only fragmentary (though increasing) attention from mass media researchers. To gain evidence of the level of literacy of today's music critics, a study examined the tastes, prejudices, and predispositions of an important group of gatekeepers of popular taste--the music critics. Subjects, 160 magazine and newspaper critics (20% of the population originally surveyed) representing every major metropolitan area in the nation, responded to a questionnaire. Findings revealed that: (1) newspaper and magazine music criticism differs significantly in one particular way, i.e., though the numbers are small, magazines exclude negative reviews as a matter of policy significantly more than do newspapers; (2) whether by policy or not, music critics estimate that they write few negative reviews, categorizing only about one-fifth of their reviews as negative while reporting about one-half as positive; (3) music critics regard both negative and positive reviews as more influential than mixed reviews; (4) music critics overwhelmingly oppose various warning, rating, and labeling schemes; (5) critics assign highest priority to genuinely popular music genres, with rock leading the pack, followed by soul, jazz, and country; and (6) music critics assign high importance to diversion, escape from reality, and companionship in assessing the functions of music, but relatively low priority to sexual experience and thrills. (Four tables of data and 32 notes are included.) (MS)

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The Music Critic in the American Press:

A Nationwide Survey of Newspapers and Magazines

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The Music Critic in the American Press: A Nationwide Survey of Newspapers and Magazines

Eddie the Eunuch is a rock-n-roll critic
Sucking up to superstars
Slicker than a shoeshine
Quicker than a two-time
Eddie, what a thing you are![1]

According to one cynical saw in the newspaper trade, music critics are writers who can't write interviewing performers who can't talk for readers who can't read.

Despite the pervasive presence of popular music in our society and the continued controversy over its effects on children and teen-agers,[2] the recording industry has received only fragmentary (though increasing) attention from mass media researchers.[3] Further, empirical examination of the tastes, prejudices and predispositions of an important group of gatekeepers of popular taste--the music critics--has been all but nonexistent.[4] Music critics, in fact, have never been accorded their own exclusive published survey, but, instead, have been represented only incidentally in more general studies of reviewing in the American mass media.[5] Thus, communications researchers have no certain evidence of the level of literacy of today's music critics, much less an understanding of their perceptions of the performers they write about and the public they write for.

In order to better understand the characteristics of music critics and to provide additional insight into music coverage in the American press, a nationwide survey of newspaper and consumer-magazine music critics was instituted in the spring of 1987. This study was part of a larger series of surveys of the nation's entertainment writers and critics that had already focused on book-review editors and film critics.[6] It is the first survey in the series, however, to include magazine as well as newspaper critics.

Research Questions

Because of the paucity of studies of reviewers in general and music critics in particular, a number of important research questions presented themselves for examination.

Who are America's popular music critics? What are the demographic characteristics of these writers whose articles and reviews are read by millions on a daily or weekly basis? How do these critics view current attempts by various groups--including the Washington-based Parents Music Resource Center--to pressure record producers to print lyrics, warnings or even movie-style ratings on album covers?

Are music writers tough critics of the music they cover, or do they act mainly as extensions of the publicity efforts of major labels? Do music critics perceive themselves to be constrained by publication policies discouraging negative reviews, or do they engage in self-censorship to avoid publishing adverse criticism? What percentages of their reviews do they

categorize as positive, mixed or negative? And how influential do they perceive each of the various review types or directions to be in stimulating or depressing audience interest in a recording or performance?

Are there important differences between critics who work for daily newspapers and those who are employed by monthly magazines? Are magazine critics more urbane, more highly educated or tougher critics than their newspaper counterparts?

Do music critics at larger newspapers or at magazines in more cosmopolitan markets tip their tastes toward more elite forms of music--as a previous survey suggests is the case with book-review editors?[7] Or do music critics retain the popular touch regardless of the kind of publication their write for--as another survey reveals is the case with film critics?[8]

Do newspapers in larger markets increase the amount and kind of music coverage dramatically compared with their small-market counterparts--as is the case in book reviewing?[9] Or do most of America's newspapers and magazines provide about the same amount and kind of coverage regardless of size--as is the case in film reviewing?[10]

Finally, what functions of music--"uses and gratifications," if you will--do music critics believe are important? To what degree do they value the social and interpersonal functions of music listening, the aesthetic pleasures derived therefrom or the thrills and arousal generated thereby?

To answer these and other important questions, a nationwide survey was conducted in 1987, yielding responses from newspapers

and consumer magazines with a combined circulation of more than 26 million.

Method

In developing the mailing list for newspapers, newspaper critics and editors were identified from the 1987 Editor & Publisher International Yearbook. In the hope of reaching the largest possible sample even at the expense of response rate, questionnaires were also sent to persons listed as "entertainment editor" or "arts editor" when no music critic was designated, bringing the total number of newspaper critics surveyed to 571 . A list of 250 magazine critics was developed through examination of individual issues of the publications listed in 1987 issues of Standard Rate and Data Service, Consumer Publications and Business Publications that indicated that they ran entertainment sections or reviews as well as through lists made available by prominent record labels. Two waves of questionnaires were sent to potential respondents, beginning in May 1987. A thank you/reminder followed the first mailing.

In order to address the major research questions, multi-item scales sought to measure the critics' priorities for various genres and the socio-psychological functions they assigned to music. These scales were scored on 0-100 "thermometer" indexes and were submitted to R-factor analysis employing varimax rotation to extract the number of factors suggested by a scree test. Standardized factor scores were calculated for each respondent using the regression method.

The questionnaire also contained items covering basic demographics, reviewing practices, attitudes toward labeling and censorship and estimates of the critics' production of positive, mixed or negative reviews. Wherever possible, questions employed interval-level measurements or were dichotomous in order to permit the use of robust statistical procedures. In determining significant predictors of dependent measures, stepwise multiple regression equations were constructed employing the following measures: the number of reviews the critic writes per week or per magazine issue, whether the critic works for a daily newspaper or a magazine, the total number of years covering music, whether the critic covers primarily popular or classical music, whether the critic includes a rating scales (stars, numbers, etc.) with each review, and number of times quoted in advertising as well as education, age and sex.

Circulation size alone was also employed as a basic independent variable because of its use throughout the industry to discuss newspaper characteristics. Circulation size was also chosen because, in previous studies, it proved significant in distinguishing the amount and type of book coverage, although it was not particularly useful in assessing the amount and type of film coverage.[11]

A total of 195 responses was received by the cutoff date in October 1987. Of these, 160 produced usable questionnaires, 20% of the original population.[12] Eight respondents indicated that their newspaper or magazine ran no music reviews and three

declined to complete the form because of various other objections.

Completed questionnaires included 115 newspaper critics (20%) and 45 magazine critics (20%) and represented every major metropolitan area in the nation. Responding magazines ranged from general-interest publications (People, Newsweek) to entertainment-oriented media (Playboy, The Village Voice) to music-centered journals (High Fidelity, Rolling Stone, Country Music, Variety).

Response by circulation category--computed from the original interval-level data--was:

	Newspapers	Magazines
Under 25,000	16	5
25,000-49.999	26	2
50,000-99,999	20	6
100,000-199,999	22	14
200,000-499,999	11	9
500,000 and above	9	6

Results

One surprising finding was that newspaper critics and magazine critics differed so little in most major respects. Despite variations in minor variables, any assumption that magazine critics would be more elite in their tastes and predispositions is disputed by these data. Further, circulation size proved generally unenlightening in explaining differences among critics, and multiple-regression analysis produced few

significant and meaningful predictors of the major dependent variables employed in this survey.

Music Coverage Characteristics: Responding critics reported that their publications covered a mean of more than three (3.35) live performances per week or issue, reviewed just under 10 records (8.84) and ran more than six (6.46) other music-related features. None of these variables are significantly correlated with circulation. Thus, larger publications do not run significantly more music criticism than their smaller counterparts.

The responding critics also reported writing about three (3.14) performance or recording reviews per issue. They estimated that they themselves wrote nearly half the reviews (46%) in their publication and that nearly one-fourth of the reviews (23%) were produced by other staffers. They further estimated that 17% came from wire copy and 25% from free-lance writers.[13] The percentage of wire reviews showed a modest decline with circulation (r = -.21, p < .01), while the percentage from other staffers showed a modest increase (r = .22, p < .01).

Magazines, however, do review significantly more musical events per issue than newspapers review per week and newspapers rely more heavily on the wire services for music copy, while magazines turn more frequently to free-lancers. Differences between newspaper and magazine music coverage are summarized in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Music Critics' Characteristics: The vast majority of critics were college educated and a substantial percentage had completed some graduate work. Nearly one-half (72 or 48%) held at least a bachelor's degree and 19 (13%) reported some college. Twenty-eight (19%) reported some post-graduate work and 14% possessed a master's degree. Six critics (4%) held a doctorate, while 3 (2%) had graduated only from high school. Education was not significantly correlated with circulation or related to publication type.

Only six critics (5%) reported that their highest degree was in music, while nearly half (61 or 46%) held the degree in journalism and one-fifth (32 or 20%) in English. That finding supports the comments of critic Jon Landau who says that the educational background influences the critical approach. "Most rock critics have a background in literature, journalism or the social sciences. Few of them have a background in music. As a result most rock criticism spends too much time dealing with a record's literary qualities and not enough with its musical ones."[14] In age and education, music critics are similar to book review editors and film critics.[15]

A heavy majority of critics (114 or 71%) were full-time newspaper or magazine employees, and newspaper critics were significantly more likely ($chi\text{-}square = 27.37$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) to be full-time employees (91 or 81%) than were magazine critics

(21 or 49%). More than three-fourths of full-time employees (113 or 76%) reported that they had duties other than covering music for their publications, and they reported devoting just more than one-fourth (28%) of their work time to music reviewing. General feature writing and arts reporting represented the majority of other duties listed.

About one-third (51 or 34%) indicated that they have performed as a musician for pay, but only 14 (28%) of these indicated that they still perform. Only 14 (10%) identified themselves as primarily classical music critics (11 from newspapers, 3 from magazines), while the remainder (131 or 90%) identified themselves primarily as popular music critics. Classical music critics were rather evenly distributed across circulation category and there was no significant relation between circulation size and identification as a classical critic.

Very few critics (14 or 10%) indicated that they included a rating scale (stars, numbers, etc.) with each review, a practice that contrasts dramatically with the more than half of film critics who incorporate scales with their reviews.[16] Nearly half (69 or 47%) reported that they had been quoted in advertisements, a mean of 9.54 times each. The percentage of magazine critics quoted (30 or 71%) was significantly higher (chi-square = 18.77, df =2, $p < .001$) than that of newspaper critics (36 or 36%), indicating higher visibility on the part of magazines. But differences in the number of times quoted did not reach significance.

Respondents' mean age was 35.55. They reported a mean of more than 12 years experience in journalism (12.98), with more than nine years (9.31) devoted to covering music. Magazine critics had covered music significantly longer (12.91 years) than newspaper critics (7.77 years, $F = 14.18$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) but did not have significantly more general journalistic experience. Critics reported holding their current position for a mean of nearly five years (4.99), a figure that did not differ for magazine or newspaper employees.

More than two-thirds of respondents (114 or 77%) were male. Sex (maleness) was negatively but weakly correlated with circulation ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$).

Perceptions of Review Direction: The most striking difference between newspapers and magazines lies in the fact that magazines exclude negative reviews as a matter of policy significantly more than newspapers (chi-square = 5.15, $df = 1$, $p < .05$), although the percentages are low in either publication category. While six of 40 responding magazine critics (15%) indicated that their publications exclude negative reviews, only 3 of 102 newspaper critics (3%) so indicated.

The same pattern was evident when critics were asked whether they themselves excluded negative reviews as a matter of personal policy, with magazine critics being significantly more likely than newspaper critics to shun negative reviews (chi-square = 5.30, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Seven magazine critics of 41 reported that they exclude negative reviews (17%), while only four newspaper critics of 101 indicated that they do likewise (4%).[17]

Whether because of policy or not, music critics overwhelmingly avoid negative reviews. Respondents estimated that nearly one-half (49%) of all their reviews are positive, while nearly one-third (32%) are mixed and only about one-fifth (20%) are negative.[18] Neither circulation size nor publication category was significantly related to estimates of the percentages of each review direction.[19]

If these estimates are correct, music critics are far more positive in their reviewing than their film-critic counterparts who responded to the previous survey.[20] Film critics indicated a much more uniform balance, with about a third of their reviews belonging to each review type (30% positive, 38% mixed, 34% negative). Multiple regression analysis produced no other predictors of perceptions of review direction.

Perceptions of Critical Influence: Critics regard both positive and negative reviews as far more influential than mixed reviews. On 0-100 scales, where 100 represented the highest imaginable influence and 0 the lowest, their mean rating of the influence of positive reviews was 52.00, followed by negative reviews at 45.79 and mixed reviews at 35.07. These results agree substantially with results from a survey of film critics[21] as well as with experimental data actually measuring the effects of reviews on audience interest in attending a film.[22] Perception of the influence of positive reviews was correlated weakly but positively with circulation ($r = .17$, $p < .05$).

Critics rated their own influence on potential audiences relatively low on similar 0-100 scales. They judged their

influence on audiences for recordings to be a mean of 23.34 and their influence on audiences for performances to be a slightly higher 27.31. But they assessed their influence on artists at a mere 18.25[23] and their influence on other critics at an even lower 16.96. Weak but positive correlations were observed between circulation and perceived influence on recording audiences (r = .33, $p < .001$) and on other critics (r = .21, $p < .01$). Thus the relation between perceptions of critical power and increasing circulation is modest at best.

Not surprisingly, newspaper critics did perceive their influence on performance audiences--which they reach more immediately--to be significantly greater (30.40, F = 6.52, df = 1, $p < .05$) than did magazine critics (18.03). Multiple regression analysis failed to disclose additional predictors of perceptions of critical influence.

The critics low opinion of their potential influence on their readers is mirrored in the low opinion readers hold of the influence of the critics on the readers' attitudes. A 1975 Louis Harris study found that nearly 60 percent of the respondents said reviews were of "minor" importance in affecting the readers' choices.[24]

Attitude Toward Warnings and Labeling: Music critics emerged as strong opponents of campaigns by various consumer and parent groups to print lyrics on album covers, label albums with "Explicit Lyrics-Parental Advisory" as suggested by the national PTA and the Parents Music Resource Center, and to rating albums with a system similar to the Motion Picture Producers Association

(MPPA) film ratings. Quipped one critic, "How about labeling stupid people, 'I am an idiot'"?

More than two-thirds (111 or 76%) opposed printing lyrics on album covers. Reasons given in follow-up open-ended questions included the feeling that such a requirement is censorship (8 respondents); that such a move should be left up to the artists' desires (19); that lyrics would clutter the cover (9); that they should be heard, not seen (3); and that such a move is not necessary (4). Ten of those favoring printing lyrics said the procedure would simply make lyrics more understandable. No other reasons were provided for printing lyrics.

More than three-fourths (111 or 76%) opposed the "Explicit Lyrics-Parental Advisory" label. Here, 31 respondents said such a move represents censorship, while eight said parents should take personal responsibility to check out the content for themselves. Of those favoring printing a warning, two said it would serve the same function as for motion pictures.

Finally, more than 90% (130 or 90.9%) rejected a rating scheme similar to the MPPA movie ratings. Seventeen of the respondents questioned the composition of panels who would do the rating, while 16 declared such a system censorship. Two proponents said that ratings would facilitate parental guidance. The most striking omission in open-ended responses was the failure of proponents of labeling and rating systems to provide a rationale for their views.

Circulation was weakly correlated with favoring the "Explicit Lyrics" label ($r = .15$, $p < .05$), a finding whose

meaning is unclear. Multiple-regression analysis indicated that age was a significant but weak predictor of acceptance of MPPA-type ratings (R = .28, partial r = .28, p < .05).

Interest in Music Genres: To assess critics' priorities among the various genres of music, respondents were asked to rate their interest in 17 types of music on 0-100 scales, with 100 indicating the strongest possible interest in the genre and 0 the weakest. In order to discern any underlying pattern in these genres, the scales were then submitted to factor analysis, yielding a three-factor solution. Means and factor loadings for each variable, rank-ordered by mean, are displayed in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Factor 1 was designated Country/Folk because of the prominent loadings given to bluegrass, folk and country music. New age, mood and contemporary Christian music also play a lesser role in this factor. Factor 2 was called Classical/Broadway because of the high loadings given to classical music and opera as well as the moderately high loading given to Broadway. Big band and barbershop also loaded moderately on this factor. Factor 3 was designated Ethnic/Special Interest because of the high loadings ascribed to Latin and jazz and the moderately high loadings given soul and gospel music. Rock music loaded moderately on both the Country/Folk factor and the Ethnic/Special Interest factor and would doubtless have produced its own factor had several varieties of rock been included in these scales.[25]

Thus, in the following analysis, rock was examined alone as well as in concert with factors 1 and 3.

A glance at the rank order in Table 2 is sufficient to reveal that critics ascribe the highest priorities to genuinely popular forms of music represented by factors 1 and 3. The list is lead prominently by rock music--followed by soul, jazz, country, folk and bluegrass. Easy-listening type music such as big band, classical and Broadway also merited respectable ranking. These findings indicate that our critics' tastes are similar to the population at large based on Fink's study of a large national sample (N=17,254).[26]

This emphasis on popular forms is similar to the responses of film critics on the previous survey.[27] It also distinguishes music writers from book-review editors, whose highest priorities go to more elite genres such as biography, history, serious fiction, politics and environment and who assign lower rankings to popular forms such as science fiction, fantasy, self-help and gothic fiction.[28] Among book editors, priority assigned the more elite genres also increased significantly with circulation.

Multiple regression analysis revealed no significant predictors of interest in Country/Folk music. However classifying one's self as a popular--as opposed to classical--music critic (dichotomy) proved to be a moderately strong and significant predictor of increasing interest in rock music (R = .63, partial r= .42, $p < .001$), while age also proved a moderate and significant predictor of declining interest in rock (partial r = -.36, $p < .01$). Classifying one's self as a popular music critic

also predicted declining interest in Classical/Broadway music (R = .53, partial r= -.53, $p < .001$) but increasing interest in Ethnic music (R = .26, partial r = .26, $p < .05$). Popular and classical music critics' mean ratings on standardized factor scores and on rock music (also standardized from the original 0-100 scale) are displayed in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Although the number of respondents classifying themselves primarily as classical music critics was relatively small (14 or 10%), these results indicate that their tastes differ substantially from those who cover primarily popular music--a finding supported by Fink.[29] However, this distinction predicts little else about the nature of respondents, once differences in taste have been accounted for.[30]

It might be suggested that the tastes of the critics have become more "massified" than those of their readers. Our finding of a country/folk/bluegrass factor with loadings of .71, .79 and .80 respectively is at variance with a study of college students which found only a .08 loading of folk on country/western.[31]

The Functions of Music: To assess how critics perceive the various social and psychological functions of music, the importance of 15 different items culled from various lists of media functions was rated on 0-100 scales. A three-factor solution was suggested by an initial scree test. The rank order,

means and factor loadings for the music function factors are displayed in Table 4.

Factor 1 was designated Stimulation because of the high loadings of companionship, dating and sexual stimulation. Escape from reality, diversion and other thrills also play a role in this factor.

Factor 2 was labeled Time-Filling because of high loadings assigned to filling time, a basis of conversation and hearing what people are talking about as well as the moderate loadings given peer pressure and status. Diversion also played a role in this factor. Here, the function is far more passive than is the Stimulation factor.

Factor 3 was named Aesthetic because of the high loadings ascribed to aesthetic experience and expanding experience. Hearing what people talk about and escape from reality also loaded moderately on this factor.

Critics ascribed highest priority to elements in the first two factors, particularly diversion, escape from reality and companionship. Aesthetic functions received moderate priority, while thrills, sexual stimulation and religious experience received the lowest ratings. Again, music critics espouse a "popular" conception of the functions of music, concentrating on diversion, escape and companionship. However, they do relegate sexual experience and other thrills to positions somewhat lower than observers of the rock music scene might expect.

These three factors do correspond closely to those found by Lull in a study of the uses of music by listeners. He concluded

that music is an active element in socialization and that active participation with music enhances that role. "Music's impact takes place at a physical level (moving to the beat, dancing, imitating performers, etc.); an emotional level ('feeling' the music, romanticizing, relating its themes to the experiences of the listener); and a cognitive level (processing information)."[32]

Circulation and publication category were not related significantly to any music function factor, and multiple-regression analysis revealed no other significant predictors of music functions.

Summary and Discussion

The major findings of this study are:

1) Newspaper and magazine music criticism differs significantly in one particular way: Though the numbers are small, magazines exclude negative reviews as a matter of policy (6 of 40) significantly more than newspapers (3 of 102); magazine critics (7 of 41) likewise exclude negative reviews themselves as a matter of policy significantly more than newspaper critics (4 of 101).

2) Whether by policy or not, music critics estimate that they write few negative reviews, categorizing only about one-fifth of their reviews as negative while reporting about one-half are positive. This finding contrasts markedly with results of a survey of film critics, who categorized about one-third of their reviews as negative and one-third as positive.

3) Music critics regard both negative and positive reviews as more influential than mixed reviews, a finding that agrees with film critics and supports experimental data.

5) Music critics overwhelmingly oppose various warning, rating and labeling schemes. More than two-thirds oppose required printing of lyrics, more than three-fourths oppose the "Explicit Lyrics-Parental Advisory" warning and more than 90% reject a movie-type rating system.

6) Critics assign highest priority to genuinely popular music genres, with rock leading the pack, followed by soul, jazz and country. Relatively few responding critics (10%) classify their primary medium as classical music, and such classification is not related to circulation. Classical critics, however, differ dramatically in music preferences from popular critics.

7) Three factors emerged from factor analysis of genre priorities: Country/Folk, Classical/Broadway and Ethnic/Special Interest. Rock loaded both on the Country/Folk factor and the Ethnic/Special Interest Factor. Priorities among these factors did not change significantly with circulation, indicating no move toward elite or special-interest forms in larger or more cosmopolitan markets. This priority for popular forms across circulation categories separates music critics from book-review editors and emphasizes their similarity with film critics on previous surveys.

8) Music critics assign high importance to diversion, escape from reality and companionship in assessing the functions of music, but relatively low priority to sexual experience and

thrills. Factor analysis of the music function variables revealed three underlying dimensions: Stimulation, Time-Filling and Aesthetic.

Given these results, a composite image of the "average" American music critic begins to emerge. That critic is, in all probability, a well-educated male in his 30s with about 10 years' experience covering music. He has at least a bachelor's degree with perhaps even some graduate work--a fact that should lay to rest cynical saws about his inability to write literately for an audience that can't read.

Like his film-critic counterparts, this composite critic reviews a popular--as opposed to elite--art form, and his tastes do not change dramatically whether he works for a small daily in a rural area, a prestigious metropolitan newspaper or a slick national magazine. A few of his music critic colleagues do cover classical music, and their preferences in music reflect this fact; they, too, however, display fairly uniform taste across circulation categories.

Thus, music and film critics contrast markedly with book-review editors, who become more elite in their tastes in more cosmopolitan markets with larger circulations. This composite critic also does not attribute high aesthetic and philosophical functions to music but understands its primary functions to include diversion, escape and companionship.

The music critic writes far more positive reviews than negative reviews. Perhaps this finding indicates that music critics, because of the popular nature of their chosen art form,

are unaccustomed to employing stringent critical standards. Or perhaps this paucity of negative reviews is a reflection of the fact that--unlike film-critics--music critics have great discretion in choosing what to review, given the flood of recordings placed on the market each year.

The critics' consensus as to why negative are avoided was best expressed by two of the comments most often found in the open-ended portion of that segment of the questionnaire. Stated one critic, "Though I don't refrain from constructive criticism I only review music I feel positive about." "The purpose of the review," said another, "is to point out something I consider 'valuable.'" Additionally, space limitations and overall editorial policy ("Our magazine is designed to recommend good records") were frequently cited reasons for the general positive nature of the reviews.

Film critics, by contrast, can and do review nearly every film to open in an area. It is natural, then, for music critics to be more selective and to feel little obligation to pan a recording which may die a natural death in obscurity even if the critic doesn't bother to tell his readers how bad it is.

Finally, this composite critic is a strong opponent of any scheme to place lyrics, warnings or movie-type ratings on recordings, believing such moves are tantamount to censorship at worst and violate artistic freedom at best. Comments such as, "It will dampen the ability of artists to deal with subjects beyond Moon/June," "the PMRC is a joke, albeit a dangerous one" and "ridiculous censorship" were common.

The study, of course, is limited by the conditions of survey research in general. Self-reports concerning practices and priorities may be inaccurate, and response is always less than complete. Future research, then, might turn its attention to analyzing the actual content of reviews and other indicators of critical practice rather than concentrating on critics' perceptions alone. However, given the limitations of the current study, there can be little doubt that music criticism in American newspapers and magazines is alive and well, as is its subject, that most pervasive of American popular art forms.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Kris Kristofferson, "Eddie the Eunuch," Combine Music, 1976.

[2]Tipper Gore, Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987). A number of writers suggest that the conflict between generations that has been a factor in popular music from the 1800's to the present time is one of the most significant determinants of what is, in fact, popular music. See, R. Serge Denisoff, Tarnished Gold: The Record Industry Revisited, (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985), pp. 10-32.

[3]See, James Lull (ed.), Popular Music and Communication (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1987) a collection of twelve articles; Journal of Communication Research 12 (1985) a special focus issue dealing with music. The sociologists, on the other hand, have been studying popular music since the early seventies, e.g. Paul Hirsch, "Sociological Approaches to the Pop Music Phenomenon," American Behavioral Scientist, 14: 371-388 (1971); most issues of Popular Music and Society which began publication in 1972.

[4]Stan Denski, "Toward a Critical Theory of Rock & Roll: An Analysis of Current Trends in Contemporary Music Criticism," paper presented to the International Communication Association 37th Annual Conference, Montreal, 1987, purports to develop a theory of what contemporary music criticism ought to be rather than an examination of what it is. The critics are, however, fond of talking about themselves and their "art." See, e.g., Ken Richardson, "Fans vs Critics," High Fidelity, November, 1986, p.

63; Art Lange, "The First Chorus," Downbeat, November, 1982, p. 6; Benjamin DeMott, "Ordinary Critics," Harpers, March, 1981, pp. 84-87; G. Lees, "Functionalist Criticism," High Fidelity, March 1979, p. 4; George W. S. Trow, "At Lunch With the Rock Critic Establishment," New Yorker, October 4, 1976, pp. 33-35; Robert Christgau, "Yes, There is a Rock-Critic Establishment," Village Voice, January 26, 1976, pp. 83-87;

[5]See, for example, S. Meisler, "Who Covers Entertainment For Metropolitan Dailies?" Journalism Quarterly, 35:224-225 (1958); R. S. Albert, "The Role of the Critic in Mass Communications: I. A Theoretical Analysis," Journal of Social Psychology, 60:265-274 (1958);R. S. Albert and P. Whitelam, "The Role of the Critic in Mass Communications:. The Critic Speaks," Journal of Social Psychology, 48:153-156 (1958); Louis Harris and Associates, "Critics and Criticism in the Mass Media," Unpublished report, United Church of Christ, Office of Communication (New York, 1969); Trevor Brown, "Reviewers on Reviewing," Journalism Quarterly, 55:32-38 (1978); John W. English, Criticizing the Critics (New York: Hastings House, 1979).

[6]See, Robert O. Wyatt and Jack B. Haskins, "Book Reviewing Priorities in the American Press: A Survey," Newspaper Research Journal, 6:8-18 (1985); and Robert O. Wyatt and David P. Badger, "What Newspaper Film Critics Value in Film and Film Criticism: A National Survey," Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law, ed. by Bruce A. Austin (New York: Ablex, 1988), pp. 54-71.

[7]Wyatt and Haskins, op. cit., p. 14.

[8]Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., pp. 66-68.

[9]Wyatt and Haskins, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[10]Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., pp. 59.

[11]Wyatt and Haskins, op. cit.; Wyatt and Badger, op. cit.

[12]The low response rate is predictable given the attempt to reach the entire population of music critics described previously. However, the evenness of the responses across types and sizes of publications indicates that a valid sample was obtained.

[13]Because respondents estimated each percentage independently, a total of more than 100% is not surprising.

[14]Jon Landau, "Come Writers and Critics Who Prophesy with Your Pen," Rolling Stone, March 11, 1976, p. 20.

[15]Wyatt and Haskins, op cit., p. 11; Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., p. 59.

[16]Ibid., p. 60.

[17]Eight of these 11 worked for publications that did not exclude negative reviews by policy.

[18]Because respondents estimated each percentage independently, a total of more than 100% is not surprising.

[19]Multiple regression analysis employing selected independent variables did reveal that gender (maleness) was a weak predictor of the percentage of mixed reviews ($R = .283$, $p < .05$) but not of positive or negative reviews. The meaning of this finding is unclear.

[20]Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., p. 60.

[21]Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., p. 60. Film critics assigned mean influence ratings as follows: positive 58.24; negative 48.78; mixed 39.30.

[22]Robert O. Wyatt and David P. Badger, "How Reviews Affect Interest In and Evaluation of Films," Journalism Quarterly, 61:874-878 (1984); Robert O. Wyatt and David P. Badger, "To Toast, Pan or Waffle: How Film Reviews Affect Reader Interest and Credibility Perception," Newspaper Research Journal, 8:19-30 (1987).

[23]Some artists (especially jazz artists) feel the influence might be greater, perhaps hurting the musicians ability to procure employment. See David Liebman, "A Musician Criticizes Critics,' Downbeat, November 1984, p. 62.

[24]Americans and the Arts, survey conducted for National Research Center of the Arts, New York: Associated Councils of the Arts, p. 42 (1975).

[25]One study of college students tastes, which included 26 different categories, 14 of which were types of rock, produced eight varimax rotated factors, some of which were exclusively rock types. Peter G. Christenson and Jon Brian Peterson, "The Musical Tastes of Rocks Second Generation," unpublished paper presented at International Communication Association, Chicago, Illinois, (1986).

[26]Edward Fink, John Robinson, and Sue Dowden, "The Structure of Music Preference and Attendance," Communication Research, 12: 301-318 (1985). They used multi-dimensional scaling to identify a country/bluegrass, rock/soul/jazz, classical/show/opera and a

hymn/barber/folk (specialty) dimension with big band falling between the classical and specialty dimensions.

[27]Wyatt and Badger, op. cit., p. 66-67.

[28]Wyatt and Haskins, op. cit., p. 13.

[29]Fink, Robinson and Dowden, op. cit.

[30]Although a study by James Skipper suggests race, sex and social class as significant indicators of musical taste he did not factor analyze across musical categories. James K. Skipper, Jr., "How Popular is Popular Music?: Youth and Diversification in Musical Preferences," Popular Music & Society, 2:145-154 (1973). Denisoff and Levine have suggested that generational differences, as opposed to sociological or political differences, are the most significant factors affecting like/dislike of rock music. R. Serge Denisoff and Mark H. Levine, "Generations and Counter-Culture: A Study in the Ideology of Music," Youth and Society, 2:33-58 (1970).

[31]William S. Fox and Michael H. Wise, "Musical Taste Cultures and Taste Publics," Youth and Society, 7:198-224 (1975).

[32]James Lull, "On The Communicative Properties of Music," Communication Research, 12:363-372 at 368 (1985).

TABLE 1

Music Coverage Characteristics by Publication Type

	Newspapers (per week)	Magazines (per issue)
Live performace reviews	3.38	2.08*
Recording reviews	3.64	20.30***
Other music articles	4.54	11.66***
Number of reviews by respondent	2.96	3.75
Percentage of respondent reviews	55.38	24.77***
Percentage of wire reviews	23.73	0.13***
Percentage of other staff reviews	19.15	29.65*
Free-lance reviews	19.74	51.76***

* $p < .05$

*** $p < .001$

TABLE 2

Rank Order, Means and Factor Loadings for Genre Ratings

(Highest Factor Loading for Each Variable Underlined)

	Mean	Factor 1 (Country-Folk)	Factor 2 (Classical)	Factor 3 (Ethnic/) Special-Interest)
Rock	70.00	.<u>40</u>	-.42	.35
Soul	58.87	.36	-.38	.<u>65</u>
Jazz	53.27	-.12	.37	.<u>71</u>
Country	46.36	.<u>71</u>	-.22	.14
Folk	41.77	.<u>79</u>	.08	.14
Bluegrass	34.97	.<u>80</u>	-.02	.17
Big Band	33.79	.05	.<u>63</u>	.40
Classical	33.29	.00	.<u>79</u>	-.07
Broadway	29.13	.26	.<u>68</u>	.06
Gospel	26.97	.40	-.05	.<u>63</u>
New Age	26.63	.<u>60</u>	.30	.08
Latin	21.41	.13	.04	.<u>79</u>
Mood	20.64	.<u>68</u>	.22	.01
Opera	17.07	-.02	.<u>79</u>	-.10
Contemporary Christian	15.87	.<u>66</u>	.14	.12
Barbershop	7.70	.30	.<u>49</u>	.11
Eigenvalue		4.42	2.96	1.63
Percentage of variance		27.7	18.5	10.2

Table 3

Means of Standardized Music Factor Scores and Rock by Popular and Classical Critics

	Popular Critics	Classical Critics
Country/Folk	.13	-1.06***
Classical/Broadway	-.21	1.54***
Ethnic	.10	- .78**
Rock (standardized)	.23	-1.55***

** = $p < .01$

*** = $p < .001$

Table 4

Rank Order, Means and Factor Loadings for Music Function Variables

(Highest Factor Loading for Each Variable Underlined)

	Mean	Factor 1 (Stimulation)	Factor 2 (Time-Filling)	Factor 3 (Aesthetic)
Diversion	68.92	.49	.43	-.02
Escape reality	55.58	.62	.08	.36
Companionship of friends	55.25	.75	.24	.13
Filling time	54.81	.06	.79	-.19
Aesthetic experience	52.11	-.15	.15	.79
Dating rituals	51.69	.74	.25	-.08
Expand experience	51.54	.31	-.14	.79
Peer pressure	47.20	.41	.64	-.22
Hear what people talk about	44.34	.04	.68	.49
Status	42.20	.50	.53	-.13
Basis for conversation	37.45	.30	.70	.22
Reinforcement of values	36.38	.24	.46	.12

Table 4 cont.

	Mean	Factor 1 (Stimulation)	Factor 2 (Time-Filling)	Factor 3 (Aesthetic)
Sexual stimulation	28.53	.70	.11	-.06
Other thrills	35.74	.54	.19	.18
Religious experience	23.51	.15	.41	.26
Eigenvalue		4.94	1.80	1.40
Percentage of variance		33.0	12.0	9.3